

WARNING CONCERNING COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code: <http://copyright.gov/title17/>) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of Copyrighted material.

Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be “used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research.

“If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of “fair use,” that user may be liable for copyright infringement. This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if, in its judgment, fulfillment of the order would involve violation of copyright law.

Stanford Information Delivery reserves the right to not fill a request, if in its judgement, it would involve violation of copyright law.

SOMEWHERE between Calabria and Corfu the blue really begins. All the way across Italy you find yourself moving through a landscape severely domesticated—each valley laid out after the architect's pattern, brilliantly lighted, human. But once you strike out from the flat and desolate Calabrian mainland towards the sea, you are aware of a change in the heart of things: aware of the horizon beginning to stain at the rim of the world: aware of *islands* coming out of the darkness to meet you.

In the morning you wake to the taste of snow on the air, and climbing the companion-ladder, suddenly enter the penumbra of shadow cast by the Albanian mountains—each wearing its cracked crown of snow—desolate and repudiating stone.

A peninsula nipped off while red hot and allowed to cool into an antarctica of lava. You are aware not so much of a landscape coming to meet you invisibly over those blue miles of water as of a climate. You enter Greece as one might enter a dark crystal; the form of things becomes irregular, refracted. Mirages suddenly swallow islands, and wherever you look the trembling curtain of the atmosphere deceives.

Other countries may offer you discoveries in manners or lore or landscape; Greece offers you something harder—the discovery of yourself.

A POT of basil may symbolize the soul of a people better than a drama of Aeschylus.

THE APPROACH

of everything Oriental, and precisely on that account, the *beginning* of the European soul, the discovery of our 'new world';—he who lives under such imperatives, who knows what he may not encounter some day? Possibly—a *new dawn*!

10

The Landscape

THE beauty of Greek nature seems to be due above all to two particular characteristics. The first is variety combined with extreme simplicity: the simplicity in the formal elements, the lines of the horizon; the variety being due to the light which, especially at sunrise and sunset, changes the scene magically every moment, as though clothing it in a different dress. Our attention is thus always held by this gradual transformation, the image before us being renewed through the play of light and shadows. The façade in itself is of extreme simplicity: clear sky, attractive and gentle horizon, streams and the sea's inlets. But the colours of the mountains, the surface of the sea, the tones of the sky, are always changing according to the state of the atmosphere. This happens also elsewhere, but as it is above all the light that gives this perpetual variety to the scene, and as the light is exceptional in Greece, these compelling alternations are more perceptible and manifold.

The other characteristic is the feeling of calm and repose. Rarely does the atmosphere grow forbidding, and when it does it soon clears up again: its disturbance is as a passing cloud of anger. The vibrant light of the stars, the waves of scent-laden breezes are so gentle, so calm, that it seems that the elements become rarified and are diffused into the harmony of that image of His own beauty in which God created them. . . .

11

The Light

THIS light has many odd foibles and conjuring tricks. One of these is the lens-like function of the air. All the vapours that roam the Italian atmosphere and muffle the outlines of things are

THE APPROACH

absent here. A huge magnifying glass burns up the veils of distance, making objects leagues away leap forward clearly as though they were within arm's length. The eye shoots forth a telescopic braille-reading finger to discern the exact detail and texture of a church, a wood or a chasm ten miles off. Things in the distance co-exist on equal terms with those hard by; they have a proprietary and complementary share in the patterns that immediately surround one. A distant cordillera completes a curve begun by the vein along the back of a plane-tree leaf, a far off belfry has the same intensity as a goat's horn a few yards away, a peninsula leans forward to strike the stem of a dried-up thistle at right angles. Mountain ranges that should melt with the heat-haze and recession, lean forward and impend till one is at a loss to say whether a hill is a small nearby spur or a far-away Sinai. Perpendiculars only exist in walls and towers and tree trunks—unless the trees are olives, in which case they unite and revolve like dancers or contortionists—and the only horizontal is the horizon. The sea stands bolt upright and the sun's track across it is not a highway that retreats with the curve of the globe's surface, but, till sunset flattens it and lays it on its back again, a blazing pagoda. At this late afternoon hour, the hard-hearted mountains turn golden and lavender, the valleys become ground porphyry and powdered serpentine. Where the weathered limestone has fallen away in a landslide, the virgin rock glows bright orange as though infernal forges were at work within. The light also performs several simultaneous and contradictory acts; it chisels and sharpens everything so that the most fluid curve can be broken up at once, by a shift of focus, into an infinity of angles; it acts like an X-ray, giving mineral and tree and masonry an air of transparency; and it sprinkles the smoothest and most vitreous surface with a thin layer of pollen like the damask on a moth's wing. The stones and walls, as well as staying warm to the touch long after the light has left, are absorbent to the light; they glow as if lit from inside with a wick that burns down very slowly as darkness deepens. The strangest phenomenon of all occurs with the shadows. What little there is at noon is grey and dead, and when the colours revive in the afternoon, they are a cool clear blue and arch-

ways are curving waterfalls. But in the late evening they outglare the solids that fling them, falling across white walls or grey stone courtyards or the dust of a pathway with an intensity like a magnesium flare, standing from the surfaces that register them in electric-blue and orange and sulphur-green shapes as separately as though they were in high relief or deep intaglio. The motionless trench dug by a tree-shadow or the shifting and instantaneous bird-shaped cavity that crosses a terrace looks far more real than the tree trunk or the swooping bird which they echo; both of these the light, by comparison, has immaterialized. It is probably because of all this that a strong mystical and sentimental significance pervades the actual surface of the earth, the rocks and the stones, of Greek mountains. The adjective *theobadiston*, 'trodden by the feet of gods (or God)' in ancient Greek and in the Byzantine liturgy, comes to mind. In an old ballad which describes a quarrel between two great mountains, free Olympus is held to be good because it is *Klephtopatiméno*, 'trodden by klephts', as opposed to the *Tourkopatiméno*, the Turk-trampled, the shameful flank of wretched Ossa.

These characteristics have a strange effect on the Greek landscape. Nature becomes supernatural; the frontier between physical and metaphysical is confounded.

HERACLEITUS the Ephesian is most clearly of this opinion [that there will some time be a change into the essence of fire]; he considered that the world in one sense is eternal, but in another sense is in the course of destruction, knowing that the world of this world-order is none other than a modification of the eternal world. But that he knew that the world exclusively as such, composed of all reality, is eternal, he makes clear by these words: 'This (world)-order (the same for all) did none of the gods or men make, but it always was and is and shall be: an everliving fire, kindling in measures and going out in measures.'